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THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

A SERIES OF TRACTS

BY

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"THY KINGDOM COME."

No. 1.—PRAYER AND THE WAR.

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No. I.

PRAYER AND THE WAR.

"THE Lord reigneth." God already governs the innumerable multitude of material worlds; but he does not yet reign in all hearts. A few rejoice in his sovereignty, and those few will soon become many, and the many will become all. How beautiful is the harmony of the heavens! How dark and stormy the convulsions of the earth! Yet order, even here below, will spring out of disorder, and the Spirit of God, brooding over the dark and stormy deep, will give rise to a new moral world of light and beauty.

The great lesson which we have to learn and to practise is, that in human affairs God does not work without man, but makes him co-efficient though subordinate to himself. All great and ameliorating changes are to be preceded by prayer. Prayer is the law of the kingdom of heaven, and its motive principle. Even to the King Messiah it is said, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and

the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;" and the voice of God's people to the future Subduer and Saviour of the world is, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty;" where we see the language of prophecy is exchanged for the expression of prayer. If God's people ask, the promise will assuredly be performed, and the victory and dominion be secure.

Prayer should be the habitual language of the believer, for it is the cry of want addressed to the source and centre of plenty and power. But we do not feel our deep need in any adequate degree, till we are brought by pain and misery to cry out for relief. Hence, in order that God's people may be a praying people, they are also a poor and afflicted people, whose faith is stimulated into constant exercise by adverse events. And thus, though war, pestilence, and famine be judgments upon God's enemies, they also serve as most merciful remembrancers to stir up God's people to a fervour of prayer unknown to their more prosperous days. We have an apparent example of this in the present war: the chief revivals which we at present experience are connected with that war. The danger of relatives and the losses of friends have evidently raised up an earnestness of intercession which has had power with God, and has prevailed. The careless in many instances have become thoughtful; the doubtful have been brought to decision; and those

who have already been in the faith, but weak in the faith, have waxed strong. The war, however, bears evident tokens of God's judgments, as well as of his mercies. In many respects it has been most disastrous for Britain ; and though these disasters may be traced to human incapacity, they have not less to be regarded as signs of God's displeasure. In the Spirit of Prayer, we would desire to observe, but with humility and sorrow, the points in which we appear to have failed.

In the first place, Britain is more careful of the affairs of foreign nations than of her own, at least more sensitively so. She guarantees the integrity of the Ottoman Empire without taking sufficient measures for guaranteeing the integrity of her own dominions. Both army and navy had confessedly been too much reduced, and in several not improbable contingencies were not adequate for the defence of Britain. But the integrity of Turkey seemed more an object than the safety of Britain. We are apt to take the place of Providence, or rather to supersede it, with respect to foreign nations, while we have a blind unscriptural reliance for our own preservation, without using the proper means.

There are great mistakes with regard to the balance of power. In spite of us that balance is continually changing, and that from the internal development of the resources of different nations, much more than

from some paltry acquisitions of foreign territory, which are as often a source of weakness as of strength.

A balance which requires much more to be attended to is the balance of justice, even the doing to all men as we would that they should do unto us. This would redress the inequalities of fortune, and more than restore the equilibrium when it was disturbed by prosperous oppression. The first duty of Britain is to favour, not violently but continuously, the cause of civil and religious liberty; and acting thus consistently, and upon principle, we should obtain allies secret or avowed in every nation. There are two great divisions of the world: the cause of right and the cause of might; and we should always be of the party of the former. Might may triumph for a moment, but the right has both earth and heaven on its side, and will ultimately prevail.

All our failures and disasters may be traced to the neglect of the simplest rules of prudence: we had an army scarcely sufficient for a peace establishment, and we have plunged without plan or preparation into war. Again we have attempted to supply the want of proper preparation by mere make-shifts. The regiments intended for actual service had not their full complement, and this, by a temporary expedient, was attempted to be supplied by drafts from other regiments: which in their turn, thus doubly disqualified for foreign service, required to be sent abroad. Thus two or

three regiments were injured without one being brought to its full and perfect action : for men should know their officers, and officers their men ; and each and all should have a deep-rooted attachment to their own appropriate colours, which have waved over so many fields of victory.

A large force was not requisite at first : the main object should have been to guard Constantinople and the Dardanelles. These safe and secured, the Russians might have wasted away their forces in passing the Danube, and in attempting to pass the Balkan, while their strength was doubly exhausted by every advance at once filling the hospitals and weakening their extended line of invasion : adding to the strength of their opponents and diminishing their own. A small army would have required a small magazine of provisions and a small commissariat : and conducting war at first on a small scale would have avoided the great blunders which ignorance and inexperience are exposed to, when operations are carried out on a scale of extended magnitude. To these armies, which might have been gradually, not suddenly augmented, and whose commissariat, transport-service, and medical staff, might quietly have been enlarged in proportion, an auxiliary force, as in the Roman wars, might have been added equal to the legionary, raised in the East, and, if trained by French and English officers, admirably adapted to act with either army, habituated to

the climate, and inured to live on such resources as the country might afford.

If a distant field of enterprise were to be entered upon, Asiatic Turkey in the first campaign ought to have had the preference of the Crimea. The Asiatic-Turkish Army was miserably organized, but such as it was, if aided by French and English auxiliaries, the Russians, even without such victories as Alma and Inkermann, might have been overwhelmed in every direction to the south of the Caucasus, and the whole of the Caucasus have been transformed into a living and inviolable fortress against any future advance of the Russians through the mountain passes.

But we passed from a state of inactivity into a spasmodic energy, and without knowing the strength of the country we were about to attack, and its unhealthy climate, or regarding the lateness of the season, we fatally, without sufficient preparation, or foreknowledge of the resistance we were to meet with, attacked the Crimea. If the Crimea were to be attacked, the first object to be gained was to secure the Isthmus of Perekop, and thus cut off the Russians that were in the Crimea from the reinforcements that might be sent to them from the interior of the empire. If masters of the sea and of the isthmus, the full accomplishment of the campaign was a matter of calculation and time, for the back entrance through the Rotten Sea either might have been stopped, or would have been of little avail.

The passage is too frequent and easy from inactivity to temerity. Something required to be done in order to meet expectations; and yet the time for attacking the Crimea was past. Two months earlier, and there might have been a different result. We gave the Russians time for preparation, and we did not use the time in gaining information. We knew not the amount of the force to be opposed to us, nor the strength of the fortifications which were to be overcome. A town was invested in a truly Hibernian fashion. There was free communication between the besieged and whatever supplies might be sent to them; and after a long delay in erecting batteries, the fire of the besiegers might be perceived to be inferior to that of the besieged. It was no longer a point of policy; it was only a point of honour to persist in an undertaking where all means and appliances were left unprovided for a successful issue to the campaign. Neither the Russians nor the English, as far as the art of war was concerned, had anything to boast; but death reigned without employing a sword. The pestilence and famine—the want of all things—of food, raiment, and shelter, reduced what was called the finest army that Britain ever sent forth, and alas! the only army that Britain possessed, to the mere remnant and skeletons of the regiments which had marched so freely and fearlessly to the war. Human armies they had overcome, but the frown of the God of armies

melted them away. The judgments of the Almighty are sore upon us; and if ever there was a time that called for prayer, it is now. It is not only the evils that we suffer, but the consequences of these disasters that we have still most deeply to dread. The governments of Europe are weighed in the balance, and most, if not all, it is to be feared, will be found wanting. Britain, it might have been hoped, would have formed an exception; but judgment is beginning with us, and the stroke is most heavy upon Britain. The loss of forty or fifty thousand men, though a severe calamity, might be easily reparable by other nations. But it is our all—we have no second army to bring into the field, and are chiefly garrisoned by a raw militia. All the errors that have been committed, are recoiling upon our heads with a fearful impetus of danger, if not of destruction.

Britain may look back on a long train of misconduct and disasters; for though the people are among the most intelligent in the world, its governments have not been in general distinguished for success. We abound generally in fluent and lengthy speakers, but whose actions seldom correspond with their words. The very facility of forming a plausible excuse being generally the accompaniment as well as the cloak of a propensity to blunder. The name of Sebastopol, even should it ultimately fall, will form the continuance of a long line of shame and disgrace which we had hoped

had terminate dwith Walcheren. But God has seen fit again to humble us under a still severer stroke of his afflicting rod.

There is a striking contrast between our public and private affairs. The private are admirably managed by individuals, and are prosperous beyond example. The public affairs are evidently under the direction of heads of a very different classification. In many countries, the governments may be superior to the people ; in Britain, the people are evidently superior to their rulers. The cause is not far to seek. Asking a Savoyard the reason of the reputation of their troops, the answer was ready, "Our nobles are extinct ; every man rises by merit." In Britain, on the contrary, we have an exclusive aristocracy—an aristocracy which has the additional disadvantage of being both new and narrow. There are only about five hundred families, and few of these possess historic names. The choice among these is not great, and it becomes more limited still. It is not all even of this very narrow aristocracy that have any chance of office. A few families divide among them the offices of government, to the exclusion of many of their peers. As far as administration is concerned, the aristocracy has degenerated into an oligarchy, and that oligarchy is split into separate and hostile factions ; as in a company of provincial play-actors, the parts cannot be recast without putting the *rôle* of hero or heroine into

still more incapable hands; so in our ministry, any pretended change only sends the office-bearers from one office of which they know little, into another office of which they know less.

The reputation of Britain is lowered throughout Europe. The people, like the Greeks, still remain the first of men. But what Napoleon the First could not do, our ministry can easily effect—tarnish the reputation of the country, and exhaust its armies and its resources.

We must look for the remedy higher than man. Our appeal must be, in the first place, to God. He has raised up in former days a Marlborough, a Nelson, and a Wellington, who overbalanced the incapacity of former ministries, out of weakness waxed strong, and put to flight the armies of the aliens. "I therefore exhort," says St. Paul, "that supplications be made for all men, for kings, and for all in authority." Prayer should therefore arise for the Queen morning and evening. None of our misfortunes are attributable to her, who still has the cause of Britain at heart, and who still possesses the hearts of her subjects. May she never lose them! Prayer should be made continually for the Queen's ministers. May God deliver her from hollow-hearted or weak-headed men, and surround her with those who are fitted for as arduous a situation as man ever occupied!

Wise, upright, valiant, not a venal band
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And honour, which they do not understand.

Prayer also should be made for both Houses of Parliament, lest they be weighed in the balance and found wanting, when they come up in remembrance before God, with all other bodies to whom political power has been intrusted, before the angel pours out the fulness of his vial into the political heavens and before the storms are let loose which will shake to their centre all the institutions of the world. Above all, prayer should be made for the people, the true heart of Britain, whence all that is vital circulates to the remotest branches of the political body, that they may maintain integrity of purpose and firmness of resolution. They have the real and ultimate power in their hands, as far as they possess the power of election and the choice of Members of Parliament. Let them never intrust men with the affairs of the nation to whom they would not commit their own private affairs. Let the elected at least be honest, and if possible religious —men who fear God and hate covetousness, and who will ask counsel of the Most Wise before they give advice or instruction to others, and with God's blessing all will yet be well.

The tropical tornado has begun. It is attracting all the elements of storm and destruction within its vortex, as with an ever-widening eddy it sweeps over

land and sea. We may guarantee the Turkish Empire, but we cannot prevent the mystical Euphrates from drying up. In prosperity as well as in adversity, amidst victories as well as defeats, the Turks are disappearing from the lands they have conquered, and their strength through their very successes is wasting away. They have no great mass of population to fall back upon. They are a large army, but an inconsiderable people, and have no funds either of men or money to sustain a long protracted war. This was foreseen by our great Harrington even in their palmiest days. The Turkish Emperor can only retain the sword in his grasp by the assistance of his Christian allies. But have these allies the right to place and retain the sword in his enfeebled grasp, when that sword must be used to strike off the head of every Moslem who renounces the imposture of Mahomet? Are we well advised also in the strictness of our alliance with the Anti-Christian and Papal powers? A cup is in the hand of the Lord, and it is red with the mixture of the wine of his wrath. All these nations must drink of it. And if we identify ourselves too closely with them, may we not also in some measure have to drain the bitter dregs along with them?

It is a time of judgment. Let us humble ourselves before the Lord. It is a time of partial revival. Many, according to the best accounts, have passed through those judgments into the realms of endless

peace. Death reigns, but grace reigns likewise. May those partial revivals become universal ; and while the outpouring of the vials of wrath is restrained at the voice of prayer, may showers and showers of blessings descend both upon our own country and upon distant lands !

The Euphrates is drying up. No expression could more correctly describe the gradual wasting of the Moslem powers.

The Papal Beast was to descend "alive" into the abyss of destruction. After wasting away for a time, it has become fully alive again, and is therefore prepared for its *sudden* and opposite doom. It has fully deified the Virgin, and completed its circle of blasphemies. What waits it but the end ?

The Northern Hailstorm is descending, and men feel its oppressive and deadly weight. From the Icy sea to the burning sands of Africa, there is mourning and lamentation and woe.

The powers of Europe are to be shaken, Britain has received a shock which will long be felt. The "representative system is on trial," and in danger, according to Lord Lansdowne. In our opinion, it is the oligarchy, the place-hunter, and the bureaucracy, that are in danger.

Few aristocracies now remain ; those which remain will be put upon their trial. If an aristocracy degenerates into an oligarchy, it must perish inevitably in the

general ruin which is overtaking antiquated institutions. But if an aristocracy ceases to be exclusive, and becomes entirely national, it will stand erect among the crumbling edifices of former days.

Our final appeal is to the people. Form prayer-meetings. Form associations for sending fit members to Parliament, and the representative system, in spite of Lord Lansdowne, will be no longer upon trial. It will justify itself and save Britain. Much, if not all, will depend on what men are sent to Parliament during the next ten or fifteen years. May God be our refuge and strength! a very present help in this time of trouble.

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